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Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6314th meeting

Monday, 17 May 2010, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Salam	(Lebanon)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Ebner
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Li Baodong
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Issoze-Ngondet
	Japan	Mr. Okuda
	Mexico	Mr. Puente
	Nigeria	Mr. Amieyeofori
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. Apakan
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Anderson

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2010/169)

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10-36420 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2010/169)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Serbia, in which he requests that the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Jeremić (Serbia) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Zannier to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Skender Hyseni.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Hyseni to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2010/169, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Lamberto Zannier, to whom I now give the floor.

Mr. Zannier: The report before the Council today (S/2010/169) details the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) from 16 December 2009 to 15 March 2010. Today, I intend to highlight key issues and update the Council on events that occurred after 15 March.

Overall, since my most recent address to the Council in late January (see S/PV.6264) the situation in Kosovo has remained stable, although the potential remains for volatility and instability, especially in northern Kosovo and a number of significant developments have taken place. The absence of a significant process of reconciliation between the communities continues to be a challenge, and that, coupled with economic difficulties, continues to pose a risk of social unrest.

UNMIK is devoting close attention to issues affecting relations between the communities to facilitate regional cooperation, including through its presence at meetings; to focus on northern Kosovo, including by exercising administrative responsibilities in northern Mitrovica; to engage with all interested parties on issues relating to cultural and religious heritage; and to offer its good offices for the resolution of practical issues between Pristina and Belgrade in the expectation that more direct channels of dialogue for the resolution of such issues can be activated between the parties.

While there has been some encouraging movement in the cultural heritage sphere and in UNMIK's efforts to address practical inter-ethnic issues in Mitrovica, progress in other areas is still heavily conditioned by the prepositioning of the sides in relation to the upcoming International Court of

Justice advisory opinion on the legality of Kosovo's declaration of independence.

In particular, regional cooperation, which is key to badly needed economic development, has suffered notable setbacks due to status-related considerations. However, while there are no standardized procedures for the participation of the Kosovo institutions in regional or other international forums, UNMIK's facilitation has in most cases allowed the seemingly incompatible demands of the two sides to be reconciled, thus providing a concrete contribution to the development of regional cooperation initiatives.

Indeed, particularly at the technical level, we have had considerable success in facilitating Kosovo's participation in regional and international encounters, although the Kosovo authorities appear to believe that UNMIK's facilitation role is not in the interest of their declared sovereign status. As long as it is needed and helpful, UNMIK will continue to play its status-neutral role with all stakeholders in order to foster regional dialogue and cooperation. In this context, I have continued to engage with both Belgrade and Pristina, as well as with regional leaders, holding consultations on the margins of international events, as well as meetings in capitals both within and outside the region.

With UNMIK's facilitation, Belgrade and Pristina continue to have direct dealings on missing persons issues through the Working Group on Missing Persons chaired by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and on religious and cultural heritage issues through the Reconstruction Implementation Commission for Serbian Orthodox Religious Sites in Kosovo, chaired by the Council of Europe. While we have seen encouraging progress in the area of cultural and religious heritage with the welcome appointment of the head of Greece's liaison office in Pristina as a European Union (EU) facilitator, the problem of missing persons remains a major challenge to the process of reconciliation between the communities.

ICRC estimates that, as of 27 April this year, 1,862 individuals were still missing across Kosovo. On 8 April, when the Working Group on Missing Persons met in Pristina with delegations from Pristina and Belgrade, representatives of Kosovo-Albanian and Kosovo-Serb families expressed dissatisfaction with the progress made to date and demanded that the issue be depoliticized. Their call should be heeded. In this light, I warmly welcome the, announcement by Serbia's war crimes prosecutor's office on 10 May of the discovery, in cooperation with the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), of a mass grave near Raska in Serbia. The site is believed to contain the remains of some 250 Kosovo Albanians. The prompt identification and return of the remains to surviving family members will help the bereaved to achieve closure and start the healing process.

Regrettably, direct practical cooperation between Belgrade and Pristina has not extended to areas other than those I have just mentioned. The efforts of EULEX to re-establish a fully functioning multi-ethnic court in the northern part of Mitrovica have produced mixed results so far. Similarly, progress towards the establishment of full-fledged customs facilities at gates 1 and 31 is also proving difficult.

I mentioned at the outset the particular potential for volatility and instability in northern Kosovo. The situation in northern Mitrovica remains politically delicate, and the experience of past years shows that the reconstruction and returns activities in the inter-ethnic Kroi i Vitakut/Brdjani neighbourhood need to be adequately shepherded. So far, 17 Kosovo Albanian families and 40 Kosovo Serb families have moved into reconstructed and newly constructed homes in the neighbourhood, and UNMIK wishes to see this process continue unhindered. We have made efforts to assist the families in addressing the infrastructure needs of the neighbourhood through UNMIK-facilitated technical working groups, and I am pleased to report that both communities have been constructive and cooperative and that the building season in Kroi i Vitakut/Brdjani has recommenced peacefully this year. The everyday problems facing the communities here, as in so many other locations throughout Kosovo, do not discriminate; they affect all ethnicities and are best addressed through joint efforts.

Intent on opening new channels for direct dialogue between the northern and southern parts of Mitrovica, particularly on the pressing issue of returns — which leaders on both sides have raised with me — I have repeatedly visited Mitrovica over the past few months to meet with the key players. Unfortunately, obstacles to agreeing on the modalities, including who should or should not participate in this dialogue, have so far stymied my efforts to bring the two sides together on the issue, politics once again prevailing. My staff and I will continue our efforts but, ultimately, the effort and good will must come from the

local leaders on both sides, as well as from Pristina and Belgrade.

The issue of returns continues to be a source of tension in other parts of Kosovo as well, with this period having witnessed a serious display of local resistance to returns in the village of Zallq/Žac in north-western Kosovo. The spontaneous return of 23 Kosovo Serbs to the village in late March was met with repeated protests by groups of Kosovo Albanian residents of Zallq/Žac and neighbouring villages, who alleged that the returnees included individuals who had committed war crimes in the area — allegations which have not been substantiated. Five people from Zallq/Žac are still considered missing from the conflict. There have also been allegations that the protests may be motivated by property disputes.

Whatever the case, encouragingly, the Kosovo authorities welcomed the returns and allocated €100,000 to the accommodation of the returnees, and Kosovo police and the Kosovo Force provided protection. Regrettably, however, this did not stop further repeated attacks by stone-throwing youths and, most recently, the firing of bullets into the tent of a returnee family, which fortunately did not result in any injuries.

Ultimately, the situation in Zallq/Žac can be seen as a microcosm of Kosovo's humanitarian and economic challenges: the unresolved missing persons issues, the related lack of reconciliation, the difficult economic circumstances, security and property issues, and the cumulative effect of all these issues on the returns process. The reaction of the Kosovo authorities has been encouraging, but it is clear that more must be done at the grass-roots level to overcome the legacy of the past.

Since the submission of the report before the Council, measures taken by the Kosovo Telecommunications Regulatory Authority to dismantle and destroy transmitters and other equipment of unlicensed telecommunications service providers in Kosovo led to widespread disruption in the communication infrastructure in minority areas, including for emergency services. In response, transmitters operated by licensed service providers in northern Kosovo were attacked with explosives.

The issue is a complex one, with legal, political, commercial, humanitarian, and security implications. While the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority viewed the situation as a rule of law and commercial matter, the humanitarian impact of disconnections so abruptly implemented is unquestionable. The Law on Telecommunications was promulgated by UNMIK in 2003 and is still the only telecommunication sector regulation in Kosovo. In the past, UNMIK has repeatedly reminded unauthorized providers of the licensing requirements foreseen in that Law. Nevertheless, UNMIK remains concerned by the humanitarian impact of the disconnections and is monitoring the steps being taken by the Kosovo authorities to lessen the impact of the disconnections on the minority communities affected.

Since I last addressed the Council, there have been some significant changes at both the local and central governance levels in Kosovo. The newly created Kosovo Serb-majority municipalities have now set up their administrative structures and, while they enjoy a certain degree of attention and goodwill from the Kosovo authorities, it is nonetheless too early to assess their performance with respect to catering to their constituents' needs and aspirations.

At the central level, the major event since the submission of the report before the Council was a cabinet reshuffle announced on 31 March. Six ministers were replaced and a new Ministry of European Integration was established. A reshuffle of deputy ministers, which had been expected in late April, has been delayed. In the meantime, a EULEX investigation into allegations of corruption concerning the Minister of Transport and Telecommunication has strained relations between the Kosovo authorities and elements of the international community in Kosovo.

Relations between UNMIK and the Kosovo authorities are courteous, if at arm's length, and the UNMIK staff continue to maintain a variety of daily, fruitful contacts at the working level with their Kosovo counterparts.

Finally, I wish to highlight the progress we are making in the integrated mission planning process mandated by the Secretary-General. UNMIK and the United Nations Kosovo team are in the process of developing a United Nations strategic framework for Kosovo that will allow us to better share the overarching objective of ensuring lasting security and stability in Kosovo. The United Nation's strongest comparative advantage in Kosovo is its acceptance among all the communities. In this regard, UNMIK and

the United Nations Kosovo team have identified a number of common priorities and challenges that would maximize the impact of the interventions of United Nations bodies in Kosovo, especially with respect to human rights and governance, inclusive municipalities, the situation in the North and the issue of returns. I am pleased with the progress we are making.

In closing, on behalf of all UNMIK staff, I wish to thank the Council for its support and assure it that UNMIK will continue to perform its mandated functions in order to ensure continued peace and stability in Kosovo and in the region. We hope that the two sides will continue to take advantage of UNMIK's facilitation and good offices. With encouragement from this Council and cooperation from all sides, UNMIK is confident that it can continue its work.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Zannier for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs for Serbia.

Mr. Jeremić (Serbia): In 1947, then-President of the General Assembly Oswaldo Aranha of Brazil eloquently defined what he termed the principal mission of the United Nations — to unveil the truth and to face reality in all its complexity, enabling our actions to be properly guided in the maintenance of peace and security of all peoples. As we gather here for another meeting of the Security Council, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999), we should remind ourselves of his words.

With all due respect to differing points of view, when it comes to Serbia's province of Kosovo and Metohija, a manifest truth is that its status remains bitterly disputed more than two years after its ethnic Albanian authorities attempted secession through a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI).

Pristina's UDI has clearly divided the world and brought into question the fundamental tenets of the contemporary international system. It has neither contributed to Balkan stability nor enhanced regional cooperation. A substantial majority of United Nations Member States and of those seated today on the Security Council have stood firm against efforts to impose the forcible partition of my country. They have continued to respect our sovereignty and territorial integrity. On behalf of my nation, I would like to reiterate our deep gratitude for their support as we seek to resolve Kosovo's future status through patient diplomacy.

Before turning to the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/169), I want to emphasize that the principled position of Serbia's democracy remains set in stone. We will never yield and recognize UDI. We will continue to vigorously defend our position in a non-confrontational manner, using all diplomatic means at the disposal of a peaceful sovereign State.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to Special Representative Lamberto Zannier and thank him for his work. The United Nations remains an indispensable actor in Kosovo. It is therefore critical that the Council keep supporting the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) as a crucial pillar of peace and stability.

We deeply appreciate the constructive approach of the United Nations and organizations that operate under its overall authority, such as the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). They have set the stage for responsible stakeholders to work together on improving the lives of ordinary people irrespective of their ethnicity. Disagreements on status must not impede our ability to act in concert on resolving practical issues.

As a result of this approach, the unstable equilibrium on the ground has been largely kept in check. This has ensured that the overall situation in Kosovo remains "relatively calm but fragile", to quote the report.

Kosovo's ethnic Albanian authorities have on numerous occasions failed to embrace pragmatic, status-neutral engagement, notably in the rule of law area. For instance, the 2 March visit by the head of EULEX, Yves de Kermabon, to Belgrade resulted in an agreement on how to move forward rapidly on the judiciary issue, in particular as it affects the North Mitrovica courthouse. Despite having been duly apprised of its contents beforehand, Pristina publicly rejected the terms after they were embraced by Belgrade.

The international community's executive authority has yet to be used to put this breakthrough into effect and thereby pave the way for a constructive dialogue on the matter of customs. Instead, these two areas of shared interest — integral parts of the

Secretary-General's report — remain open to the detriment of the Kosovo Serb population in particular.

Regrettably, the Secretary-General's report downplays a number of growing challenges in Kosovo, from organized crime and corruption to police misconduct and judicial dysfunctionality. The European Commission's most recent progress report, on the other hand, paints a more realistic picture. It states that organized crime and corruption continue to be issues of "serious concern" and affirms that the judicial system is "weak, vulnerable to political interference and inefficient".

More recently, EULEX Acting Chief Prosecutor, Johannes van Vreeswijk, stated that Pristina's so-called Minister of Transport and Telecommunication, Fatmir Limaj, together with a tight-knit group of associates, has been under investigation since May 2009 for "money-laundering, organized crime, misappropriations of office, fraud in office and soliciting bribes". The EULEX Acting Chief Prosecutor has also suggested that the so-called Prime Minister of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, along with other Pristina-based figures, have strongly discouraged him from moving forward in his work.

In another high-profile case, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) War Veterans Association made threats against EULEX after the recent arrest of former KLA commander Sabit Geci. He was charged with crimes related to organ harvesting committed on ethnic Serb civilians in the well-known "yellow house" in neighbouring Albania.

Several Serbian officials, including Minister Goran Bogdanović and his deputy, were illegitimately expelled by Pristina under armed escort, despite being legal residents of the province. At around the same time, unilateral force was used by a Kosovo special police unit on Serbian mobile and fixed telephony, disrupting the ability of Kosovo Serbs to communicate beyond their enclaves — a serious breach of contemporary humanitarian norms. No warning was given. It was quick and violent, apparently catching many international actors in Kosovo off guard.

Thankfully, the situation on the ground is improving and the technical damage is being repaired. We must make sure this sort of unilateralism does not happen again. In this context, I would like to welcome the statements by UNMIK and EULEX that disassociated them from the controversial strategy for northern Kosovo. This unilateral scheme was sponsored by the so-called International Civilian Office. Its intent was to forcibly implement the delegitimized Ahtisaari proposal, in violation of resolution 1244 (1999).

The precarious state of Serbian patrimony remains a deeply troubling part of the reality on the ground in Kosovo. The report of the Secretary-General highlights a number of disturbing incidents, including church vandalism, graveyard desecration, the looting of icons and other relics, and the denial of property rights. Inexplicably, it continues to remain silent on the lack of progress in reversing the outrageous decision to pave over with concrete the remains of the twice-destroyed Serbian church in the centre of Djakovica. Serbia is today raising for the fifth time in the Council the fact that nothing has been done to reverse that awful act of cultural cleansing.

These illustrative examples are not isolated incidents. They cause, result in and reinforce each other, all at the same time. They are an integral part of the post-UDI reality on the ground that directly affects the return of the 205,835 expelled Kosovo Serbs registered by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Especially in south Kosovo, the police seem unable to prevent acts of intimidation and violence against Serbs exercising their right of return. For instance, the reconstructed village of Žac was repeatedly attacked over several months: homes were vandalized, power lines were cut, car tyres were slashed and children were stoned. As a result, most of its inhabitants decided to leave Kosovo. And just three days ago, one of the returnees who chose to remain was shot at by an unknown assailant while he sat in the tent in which he lives.

Senior UNHCR official Eduardo Arboleda has stated that "the return of displaced persons has literally stopped". This has been echoed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which has written that local authorities in Kosovo "have done little to encourage displaced persons to return". The well-respected Minority Rights Group International has gone further, saying in a recent report that since UDI the situation for Kosovo Serbs and other non-Albanians has worsened, and that this is forcing them to leave Kosovo "because they face exclusion and many instances of discrimination".

Notwithstanding numerous statements by the province's ethnic Albanian authorities that have claimed the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to be a priority, the reality on the ground is that in the past year, only a few hundred Kosovo Serbs have returned to their homes. That amounts to less than one half of one per cent: a staggering figure. It represents a failure of monumental proportions that must urgently be addressed. The Republic of Serbia nevertheless continues to be dedicated to finding a way to overcome these and many other concrete challenges in status-neutral ways consistent with Council resolution 1244 (1999).

In this context, I should like to underline that an understanding was recently reached with UNHCR to establish three specialized offices in central Serbia that will enable IDPs to receive Kosovo Property Agency decisions. We hope this will pave the way for more than 40,000 claims by Serbs to be finalized, leading to the recovery of illegally seized property without further delay, after more than a decade of prevarication.

The Republic of Serbia has continued to work with the international community in a number of other important areas of mutual concern. We greatly appreciate UNMIK's concerted efforts to, in the words of the report, "decrease tensions and focus on common needs" (S/2010/169, para. 12) in north Kosovo. Its irreplaceable role in resolving practical problems is very welcome, as is the offer to chair a number of multi-ethnic task forces composed of representatives of north Kosovo institutions and local ethnic Albanian authorities. We also support the European Union's (EU) enhanced status-neutral presence in north Kosovo and look forward to European Union House beginning to function at full capacity in the near future.

I am pleased to underline that day-to-day cooperation between Serbia and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) on issues of police, justice and customs has also continued apace. Information is exchanged on a regular basis, and technical discussions in a number of important competency areas have proven to be useful to both sides. Close working relationships have developed, leading to increased understanding of the needs and priorities of everyone concerned.

I would like to salute the international community's indispensable role in protecting Serbian cultural and religious heritage in Kosovo. A positive development that took place during the reporting period was the status-neutral appointment by the European Union of the head of Greece's liaison office in Pristina, Ambassador Dimitris Moschopoulos, to the position of facilitator for the protection of Serbian heritage in the province. We have already begun to work with him in accordance with Council resolution 1244 (1999) and the Secretary-General's six-point plan.

Serbia is encouraged by early signs of accomplishment. For example, Ambassador Moschopoulos has been able to convince the local ethnic Albanian authorities in the municipality of Vucitrn to redress a terrible wrong. For a decade, the Church of Saint John the Baptist in the village of Samodreza had been used as a garbage dump by the nearby elementary school. This shrine is particularly important for the Serbian people, as it was built on the foundations of the church in which the martyrs of 1389 took communion before going into the historic battle of Kosovo.

I would like to express cautious optimism that issues related to the supply of electricity for Serbian communities throughout the province will be resolved in the near future. Thanks to the constructive role played by UNMIK and especially the EU, it appears that a status-neutral solution is being worked out.

I come to the matter of the Kosovo Force (KFOR). Its unique ability to bridge existing communal divides and maintain peace and stability on the ground remains acknowledged by all. The Republic of Serbia will continue to work with our partners to ensure that KFOR's role is not diminished, especially in the context of safeguarding Serbian patrimony. We believe that proposals to hand over operational jurisdiction for guarding a number of these sites to local police units would not contribute to improving the fragile security situation. This is especially important given the opposition to such plans clearly expressed by the affected monastic communities.

Despite recent setbacks on the ground, I believe we are approaching a new, more promising moment on Kosovo. In the time ahead, we should concentrate our efforts on coming together to find a solution through dialogue. In October 2008, the General Assembly tasked the International Court of Justice with determining whether the UDI conforms to international

law. Late last year, a crucial stage in the judicial process — oral hearings — came to an end, with a record number of countries presenting their views, including all five permanent members of the Council. That has made it the largest case in the history of the Court.

The Court is close to completing its deliberations and we all have an obligation to take that fact very seriously. The judges' work should be allowed to run its course unhindered by political pressures, such as further recognition of the UDI. It is deeply regrettable that in recent months a couple of States have chosen to do this anyway, reportedly under foreign pressure, which amounts to disregard for the principal judicial organ of the United Nations.

Once the International Court of Justice reports back to the General Assembly, an unprecedented opportunity will be created to build momentum for achieving the ultimate goal: a strategic compromise between Serbs and Albanians. There is no doubt that the roots of the many problems we face in Kosovo are buried deep in history. Those problems are made even more difficult by the consequences of unilateral action.

Yet I strongly believe that we have the ability to look beyond the divisions of the past and create a new environment that will make future solutions possible. We must summon the will and courage to do what this moment in history demands. This can only be achieved through peaceful dialogue which results in a mutually acceptable outcome that provides for lasting stability in the region and the wider world.

A solution through dialogue — and not unilateralism — is our goal. We ask for the support of all United Nations Member States in solving this problem once and for all. This year can be the year of our shared success. I want to assure this Council that Serbia stands ready to flexibly engage in all sincerity, for our intent is neither to freeze the conflict nor to triumph or subjugate.

The issue of Kosovo cannot be solved by forcing conditions of submission on a party that would be compelled by circumstances to accept, for that would be done in humiliation, under duress and at an intolerable cost to democracy. It would inevitably leave a deep stain of resentment, a bitter memory upon which the terms of a one-sided outcome would rest — not even permanently, but only as upon quicksand.

On the other hand, a solution that leaves no one defeated can unite the world and contribute to advancing regional priorities within the framework set forth by international law. Only such a solution, built with the free consent of all responsible stakeholders, can last. Only such a solution can erase the divide among United Nations Member States caused by the UDI. Only such a solution merits the support of the world — not UDI.

Serbia will pursue a compromise with Pristina constructively and in good faith, as if they had never opted for UDI. But make no mistake: we are equally prepared to resist UDI unremittingly, as if no compromise were on the horizon.

I trust that the limits of the achievable can be extended because of the commitment by all to the same cause — and that cause is European integration. Dialogue between Serbs and Albanians that produces a fair and balanced agreement will provide a critical boost to securing a peaceful European future for the whole of the Western Balkans. Membership in the EU is Serbia's central strategic priority. We strongly believe in the shared destiny of all European nations. And we remain dedicated to embracing Robert Schuman's dream of an organized and living Europe indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations among States.

These ideas stand at the foundation of our democracy and our genuine desire for reconciliation. They remind us of the importance of cooperation, compromise and consensus-building, while prompting us to move beyond all of our differences and disagreements to achieve common prosperity. Even though there have been many hardships along the way, and even though much sorrow has resulted, we believe the moment has come to put aside the fear. And we believe that together we can transform the plot of land that is Kosovo and Metohija — dear to both peoples — from one of contention to one of harmony.

Let us therefore gather our strength and start preparing for the end of this historic journey. "All endeavour calls for the ability to tramp the last mile, shape the last plan, endure the last hours' toil", Henry David Thoreau said, adding that this is the virtue we must possess if we are to face the future as finishers. This is the task at hand: to create momentum and then sustain it until we achieve peace and security for all through peaceful dialogue.

Waiting around for an indeterminate period in the vague hope that one side will eventually give in is a recipe for freezing Kosovo's limbo, and that is most certainly not what any responsible stakeholder wants. The only way forward is to bring about a just compromise that balances the desires and interests of our two peoples. That is the goal of Serbia, and we will pursue it until it is achieved, for no stopping point short of agreement will ever be justified.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Jeremić for his statement.

I now give the floor to Mr. Skender Hyseni.

Mr. Hyseni: It is with deep appreciation that I take this opportunity to speak before the Security Council and inform it about the steady progress my country, the Republic of Kosovo, has continued to make in all areas during the reporting period. Celebration of the second anniversary of my country's independence precisely three months ago was another solemn and appropriate occasion to look back and take stock of achievements, progress, key events and developments in Kosovo during these two years of independence.

The recognition of Kosovo as an independent and sovereign State has continued. Since the last Security Council deliberations on Kosovo (see S/PV.6264), three more countries — the Kingdom of Swaziland, the Republic of Vanuatu and the Republic of Djibouti — have recognized the independence of my country. I wish to extend our profound thanks and appreciation to the peoples and the Governments of those countries for supporting the legitimate right of the people of Kosovo to freedom and independence.

That makes 68 nations around the world that have extended formal recognition to the youngest State in the world. But on top of that, Kosovo is blessed to have equally supportive countries among those that are still non-recognizing countries, such as those that have supported Kosovo's membership in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. And I am very happy to inform the Council that many other countries around the world have announced early recognition or have said that the procedure of formal recognition is under way.

Internally, since the last Security Council debate, Kosovo has seen a number of positive developments, as well as challenges. The overall security situation has remained calm and stable. Discussions and efforts to make Kosovo's European perspective and integration more tangible have marked the reporting period. As we are firmly committed to vigorously pursuing the goal of European Union (EU) and NATO membership, the Government of the Republic of Kosovo has engaged in a comprehensive process with institutions of the EU in order to give new dynamism to Kosovo's European perspective. Based on our Constitution, we have recently established a Ministry for European Integration, an institution that will coordinate the work of all line ministries related to specific requirements deriving from the European integration process. The establishment of the Ministry and the swift appointment of the Minister show the profound importance the Republic of Kosovo attaches to its European perspective.

Kosovo equally supports the European perspective of all the other countries of the Western Balkans. In line with that, we consider that cooperation and mutual assistance among the countries in the region are crucial to a speedy integration in the European Union of all seven countries of the Western Balkans.

The Republic of Kosovo has already started to implement a wide range of ambitious reforms to meet the required European benchmarks. Of course, we understand that this is going to be a very demanding journey. We are of the view that, just like other countries in our region, Kosovo should also soon be invited to open a visa liberalization dialogue with the European Commission.

Trade and the economy is another important sector in which we seek a more specific European perspective. A trade agreement between the Republic of Kosovo and the EU is an objective of ours. We are making every effort to reach that goal. On 16 April, the Government of the Republic of Kosovo handed over the completed questionnaire on trade relations with the European Union. We hope that this and other preparatory work at all levels will enable the Commission to start negotiations soon.

The Government of the Republic of Kosovo has stepped up its efforts to address and resolve many issues of the utmost importance for our economy: justice and security, as well as the fight against crime, corruption and cross-border criminal activity. The Government of the Republic has established a special

task force to tackle the issues of corruption and organized crime. The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo provides indispensable assistance in the police and justice sectors. We are working closely together.

Let me emphasize here how crucial bilateral and regional cooperation is in fighting organized crime. An example of close cooperation to fight illicit cross-border activity was the recent visit to Skopje of the Kosovo Interior Minister to meet with his Macedonian counterpart. On that occasion, they reconfirmed the commitment of both countries to cooperate in fighting organized crime and cross-border criminal activity. The Government of Kosovo has strongly condemned the incident that occurred recently in Macedonia in the vicinity of the Kosovo border.

On the economic front, the Government of the Republic of Kosovo recently signed a contract with the Bechtel-Enka consortium on a major project to build the Morine-Merdar highway. The construction of the four-lane motorway, connecting Kosovo with Albania in the west and with Serbia in the east, has already started. The highway will provide Kosovo — and indeed the entire region — with a highly profitable corridor, which will be very beneficial to all countries in the Western Balkans and beyond.

Moreover, the restructuring of socially owned and public companies and enterprises has also continued, through either privatization or concession, as is the case with the concession to operate the Pristina International Airport. Another crucial major project under way is the new Kosovo coal-based power plant, which is part of the governmental energy strategy.

The institutions of the Republic of Kosovo have continued to work on improving conditions in the minority community areas, especially in Serb-majority areas. To confront the new challenges, overwhelming support has been provided to the newly established municipalities and to the recently elected leadership of those municipalities. Over the reporting period, both President Sejdiu and Prime Minister Thaci have continued to reach out to the Serb community through frequent visits to Serb-majority municipalities. The authorities of the Republic of Kosovo have reached out to Zallq returnees as well, condemning strongly the incidents involved.

Furthermore, decentralization based on the Ahtisaari plan remains a political priority for the entire country. The Kosovo Central Election Commission has scheduled municipal elections to take place on 20 June for the newly established Serb-majority municipality of Partesh.

It is with reluctance, though, that I must yet again say that, through its disruptive and profoundly destabilizing interference, the Republic of Serbia has continued to be very unhelpful. Encouragement and support for illegal structures in the north has continued. The announced so-called elections to be organized by the Republic of Serbia in the north of Kosovo are another example of irresponsible and unacceptable interference. Acts such as those are aimed at undermining efforts to enforce law and order as contained in the comprehensive strategy for the north. To the extremely misleading reactions and comments to the Kosovo Government/European joint strategy for the north, I say that all that the strategy seeks to achieve is proper and normal living conditions for all Kosovo's citizens throughout our country's territory. Normalcy through the restoration of law and order throughout my country is much wanted by all Kosovars regardless of their ethnic or religious background. We are there to provide that for them.

Bilateral cooperation with neighbours, as well as regional cooperation, continues to be in the focus of the Republic of Kosovo as a high priority. The Republic of Kosovo has very good relations with its immediate neighbours — Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro — and has been cooperating closely on a wide range of issues of mutual concern. We invite the Republic of Serbia to join in the efforts of other nations of the Western Balkans to establish an environment of cooperation and understanding in the region, including the normalization of relations with the Republic of Kosovo. My Government stands ready to engage in talks with Serbia on a long list of issues of mutual interest, as two independent and sovereign States. Dialogue would help to ease tension and normalize relations between our countries.

The recent discovery in Serbia of a mass grave containing the bodies of hundreds of Kosovo Albanians has triggered a new wave of profound sadness, with thousands of Kosovar families affected by still unresolved questions concerning missing persons from the Kosovo war. It is disgraceful that, even 11 years after the war, the whereabouts of another 1,862 people are still unknown. We call upon all stakeholders to do

their utmost to finally resolve the issue of missing persons.

In conclusion, let me emphasize Kosovo's strong commitment to becoming a contributing member of the international community. The Republic of Kosovo looks forward to working with all the members of the Council as we promote the shared goal of international peace and security. Once again, I wish to thank the Council for the opportunity to present the views of the Republic of Kosovo.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Hyseni for his statement.

I shall now give the floor to members of the Security Council.

Mr. Ebner (Austria): I would like to welcome Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Foreign Minister of Serbia, and Mr. Skender Hyseni, Foreign Minister of Kosovo, and thank them for their statements. Let me further thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lamberto Zannier, for submitting the report before us (S/2010/169) and for the important contribution of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to peace and stability in Kosovo. Austria fully supports the continued efforts of UNMIK to facilitate dialogue between all parties in an evolving environment.

The period from December to March and up to today has seen progress, including the recent successful elections. At the same time, challenges continue to persist in the areas of economic development, good governance, the rule of law and the fight against corruption and organized crime, and with regard to the situation in northern Kosovo. In order to ensure sustainability and preserve the gains achieved thus far, we hope to see a continued focus by the international community in these areas and to receive information on progress made. The common strategic framework developed by UNMIK and the United Nations Development Programme will also serve this purpose.

Unfortunately, there are still no signs of communication, let alone cooperation, between the Kosovo and Serbian sides. We strongly believe that, despite the fundamental disagreement regarding the most basic legal and territorial questions, a pragmatic approach is possible, feasible and necessary for the sake of the people of Kosovo, irrespective of their ethnic background. In this sense, we hope that both sides will intensify their efforts to find pragmatic solutions to unresolved issues affecting the lives of the people living in Kosovo on a daily basis. We hope that pragmatism will also apply with regard to arrangements for the participation of Kosovo in regional and international forums, in consultation with the respective organizations.

We share the assessment that the situation in the North continues to be difficult. We believe that we need a gradual reintegration of the North into the rest of Kosovo, which will happen only through dialogue and the acceptance of both the local communities and Belgrade. We welcome the European Union's (EU) accelerated efforts to enhance its visibility and presence in the North, particularly through the establishment of the EU House in northern Mitrovica.

We welcome the recent conduct of security checks of freight going through gates 1 and 31 and the joint patrolling of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) with Kosovo police, as well as the intention of EULEX to continue to increase its presence and activities in order to address more efficiently the rule of law challenges in northern Kosovo, including the restoration of full customs controls. We fully support the efforts of EULEX to reintegrate Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian judges and prosecutors into the Mitrovica court and the in-depth discussions on this matter with the authorities in Belgrade and Pristina. We believe that the reintegration of local judges should be among the highest priorities of the international community for the North. It will offer the possibility of justice in an area where it has long been denied.

We are encouraged by the relatively calm security situation and the decrease in tensions between communities. In this context, Austria supports the steps taken by NATO to restructure the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and successively reduce troop numbers in Kosovo, which will also enhance local responsibility. Austria, which is currently the biggest non-NATO contributor to KFOR, is determined to keep up this strong commitment to the operation. Moreover, Austria will continue to provide up to 30 experts for EULEX.

Austria would also like to highlight the valuable contributions made by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) mission in Kosovo in supporting the development of democratic

institutions, in particular its continued assistance to the Central Election Commission and in the monitoring, protection and promotion of human rights, including community rights. As pointed out in the Secretary-General's report and according to a recent OSCE assessment, the implementation of return strategies is still facing a number of challenges and would require enhanced political commitment to lead to sustainable results.

Let me finally reiterate the importance of working towards a common future for all countries of the Western Balkans in the European Union. This message was again reconfirmed at a high-level expert seminar hosted by Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger with the participation of Greek Alternate Foreign Minister Dimitris Droutsas and Director-General Michael Leigh of the European Commission in Vienna on 12 May. Experts from the Western Balkans and the EU addressed the current political, economic and social challenges in the Western Balkans in view of EU integration. These discussions and some of the proposals made should stimulate the debate on the future enlargement the EU in view of the Sarajevo conference to be held on 2 June.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Lamberto Zannier, for his report. I welcome His Excellency Mr. Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, to this debate and thank him for his statement. I also thank Mr. Hyseni for his statement.

From the outset, Uganda would like to commend UNMIK for its continued efforts in promoting security and stability in Kosovo and the region. We are encouraged that the overall security situation in Kosovo during the reporting period remained relatively calm. We commend UNMIK for its proactive engagement with all communities, as well as the authorities in Pristina and Belgrade and international actors in furthering peace and stability in Kosovo. We are convinced that the work of UNMIK in supporting minority communities, encouraging reconciliation and facilitating dialogue and regional cooperation is critical.

We welcome the readiness of the authorities in northern Kosovo to cooperate with UNMIK in order to resolve the practical problems on the ground. It is important that progress be made on the discussions of practical issues despite the political differences. To this end, we commend UNMIK for engaging both sides and setting up task forces in order to promote the depoliticization of the problems and adherence to established rules and procedures.

We encourage all leaders on both sides to commit themselves to dialogue and to avoid any provocation. Every effort needs to be made to promote peaceful coexistence. The persistence of security-related incidents perpetuates insecurity among the minority communities. It is important that the perpetrators of violence be brought to justice so as to foster a sense of security among the minority communities. In this regard, we call on all parties to exercise restraint, mutual respect and tolerance in order to live in harmony.

We therefore welcome the message of peace delivered by the President of Serbia during his visit to the Dečani monastery to celebrate Orthodox Christmas, urging all people regardless of their identity to reconcile their differences for the sake of a common future. These are the kind of messages that are needed from leaders to promote peace and dialogue.

My delegation welcomes the cooperation between UNMIK and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) on exchanges of information and coordinating on issues of mutual concern. This cooperation is vital, and we encourage its strengthening within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999).

The Kosovo Force (KFOR) plays an important complementary role in maintaining an overall safe environment. In this regard, we salute the efforts of UNMIK, in coordination with EULEX and KFOR, to encourage both sides to find a sustainable and peaceful solution.

We commend UNMIK for facilitating the activities of UNESCO and for facilitating agreement on power supply issues. These activities are important because they build confidence and create better understanding among communities. We therefore encourage UNMIK to continue, in coordination and cooperation with local and relevant international actors, its efforts to address critical social service needs.

Regional cooperation plays an important role in enhancing development. We therefore encourage the authorities in Pristina and Belgrade to work together in pursuance of that goal. We are convinced that UNMIK continues to play an important role in facilitating Kosovo's engagement in international and regional forums. We call on the international community to continue to support UNMIK's important work, consistent with resolution 1244 (1999).

Finally, we commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lamberto Zannier, and the staff of UNMIK, for their good work.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): I welcome His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and we thank him for his statement. I also thank Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, for his briefing and Mr. Skender Hyseni for his remarks.

As Brazil has stated on previous occasions, resolution 1244 (1999) was intended to provide a legal framework for a negotiated solution to the dispute on the status of Kosovo. Also, it expressly recognizes the need to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The resolution remains in force and therefore continues to be the key parameter guiding the United Nations presence in Kosovo and international efforts to resolve the dispute. In that regard, we look forward to the outcome of the proceedings in The Hague on this matter. The search for a negotiated settlement on the final status of Kosovo should remain our ultimate goal.

We are satisfied that the security situation on the ground remains largely calm. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) continues to play an important role in promoting engagement between Belgrade and Pristina as well as with relevant stakeholders.

It is also positive that the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo remains active in its efforts to support stability in that country. We note with satisfaction the appointment by the European Union of a facilitator for the protection of the religious and cultural heritage of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The risk of increased ethnic tensions in northern Kosovo, however, has not disappeared. Reported attacks against Serbian returnees in some localities, for example, are quite disturbing, and must not be tolerated. Regardless of the position one takes on the status of Kosovo, now or in the future, all concerned must ensure that it is a place where ethnic tolerance and multiculturalism allow for peaceful coexistence among communities. We urge the Kosovo Force and the Kosovo Police Service to redouble their vigilance to prevent new incidents of violence.

Continued disputes related to the provision of services to the population are also worrisome. We fully endorse the call by the Secretary-General for all sides to demonstrate openness and flexibility in this regard. Pragmatism is what serves people better at this juncture. Depoliticizing problems will help find solutions, or at least some modus vivendi that addresses the practical needs of regular citizens. The UNMIK-facilitated working groups on issues of interest for local communities in northern Kosovo show that such cooperation is possible.

Full cooperation with UNMIK is also needed. It is regrettable that Pristina did not consult with the Mission in preparing and announcing its "strategy for northern Kosovo". Kosovar authorities must always bear in mind that the Security Council has given the Mission the authority to administer Kosovo in its entirety.

In the Western Balkans, as much as anywhere else, there is no substitute for dialogue and negotiation when differences arise and have to be surmounted in the interest of the people. We hope that sustained engagement and full cooperation with UNMIK, by all stakeholders, will pave the way for a transparent and inclusive approach to address issues still unsettled. We also hope that the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice will help all parties achieve a just solution.

Brazil will continue to support the work of the Special Representative in implementing the mandate of UNMIK, within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Okuda (Japan): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lamberto Zannier, for his comprehensive briefing. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to Foreign Minister Jeremić of Serbia and Foreign Minister Hyseni of Kosovo.

Japan highly values the contributions made by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), the Kosovo Force and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on the ground to support a multi-ethnic, democratic Kosovo and Western Balkan region. We also appreciate the leadership of Mr. Zannier in mediating the communication between Pristina and Belgrade and between Pristina and the northern provinces. Regarding the current situation concerning the governing institutions in northern Kosovo, we believe it is essential to avoid complications by maintaining a dialogue with the Serb community. In this context, we highly value Mr. Zannier's visit to northern Kosovo and his dialogues with both Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb leaders to address practical problems.

Establishing the rule of law across different ethnicities is among the highest priorities in Kosovo, in particular, in order to address such issues as organized crime and corruption. In this area as well, the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade is essential. We commend the role that both UNMIK and EULEX are playing in this regard.

We also take note of the slight increase in returns of internally displaced persons (IDPs). At the same time, we are concerned about sporadic incidents targeting minorities, which continue to present physical and psychological obstacles to sustainable returns. We urge further efforts and cooperation by all relevant parties to promote the return of minorities. Japan will continue to support the engagement of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in IDP returns.

In enhancing stability and prosperity in the Western Balkan region, advancing the European perspective through regional cooperation is key. I share the concerns of the Secretary-General, raised in his report (S/2010/169) and urge all parties to show further flexibility, so that their common interests can be addressed, together with Kosovo's participation in international frameworks.

Japan, as a proponent of human security, has supported the efforts of international aid agencies, such as the United Nations Development Programme, towards peaceful inter-ethnic coexistence and sustainable development. A human-centred approach is particularly relevant in the northern provinces, with due consideration given to reducing the level of vulnerability among the population. We also have held a number of bilateral consultations with Kosovo on nation-building. We are encouraged by Kosovo's progress in building its institutional capacities.

Japan remains committed to helping Kosovo to develop as a vibrant, multi-ethnic and fully democratic country, and to cooperating with Serbia and other countries in the region to enhance the stability and prosperity of the entire Western Balkan region, including Kosovo.

Mr. Li Baodong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation, thanks you, Mr. President, for having convened today's meeting. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) (S/2010/169), and we thank Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, for his briefing. We listened very closely to the statements by Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and by Mr. Hyseni.

Although there are still many destabilizing factors in Kosovo, it has been possible recently to avert a deterioration of the situation, which remains relatively stable. We welcome that. We trust that, through its ongoing mediation, UNMIK will continue to encourage all parties to enter into dialogue and to promote reconciliation and peaceful coexistence among the various communities in the region. In the future, UNMIK must be particularly vigilant regarding the impact of the strategy for northern Kosovo on the local population once it is implemented, and it must be able to react promptly.

The situation in Kosovo is both complex and sensitive. It affects peace and stability throughout the Balkans, and indeed throughout Europe. China respects the territorial integrity of Serbia and recommends that Kosovo's problems be resolved in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and on the basis of Security Council resolutions. We still believe that a negotiated solution acceptable to both stakeholders is the best way to resolve the problems besetting Kosovo, which should also be the objective of all concerned parties.

We note that UNMIK has carried out its reconfiguration and reduction. In our view, UNMIK's adjustment is not linked to the issue of Kosovo's status

and should not affect the neutral position of the United Nations. UNMIK must continue to implement its mandate pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999) and the relevant documents. We trust that UNMIK will continue to strengthen communication with Serbia and Kosovo and to play its part by providing coordination and good offices in seeking an appropriate solution to Kosovo's problems, facilitating the return of minority communities, protecting cultural and religious heritage, and maintaining security and stability throughout the Balkans.

We call on all parties concerned to support UNMIK's efforts. We trust that the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo will continue to play its role, under United Nations auspices, in the context of neutrality pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999). We trust that it will cooperate with UNMIK and thus play an appropriate role in maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to thank Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Skender Hyseni, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kosovo, for their presence and their statements. I commend the work of Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and that of all the members of his Mission.

More than two years since its declaration of independence, Kosovo continues to make progress, stabilize its institutions and demonstrate its resolve to meet European standards. An increasing number of States are joining those that have already recognized Kosovo's independence. Such recognitions, 68 to date, of which 22 are members of the European Union, help the young State to strengthen and take its place on the international scene.

Kosovo's status has already been the subject of endless negotiations under various auspices. Such negotiations, which have explored all possible avenues, have made clear the impossibility of reaching a mutually acceptable compromise. In that context, independence, which is the expression of the will of the great majority of the Kosovar people, was the only solution. That is an undeniable and irrevocable fact.

As the Secretary-General notes in his report (S/2010/169), the security situation on the ground has improved, with a decrease in incidents during the reporting period. We welcome that, but any incident — be it a case of common crime or inter-communal violence and regardless of whether it targets Albanians or Serbs — is unacceptable. The Kosovo authorities, supported by the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, must therefore prosecute the perpetrators of such crimes and step up efforts in that area.

Regional cooperation is also growing owing to calmer dialogue between political leaders and civil society throughout the Western Balkans. In that regard, we call on Serbian and Kosovo leaders to take advantage of opportunities to participate jointly in regional meetings.

While the future presence of Serbia and Kosovo in the European Union is, in our view, assured, it is equally clear that it cannot come about until both countries have taken the paths to dialogue and calmer neighbourliness and have learned the lessons of a reality that transcends vain and dangerous rhetoric. As our Foreign Minister and the European Minister for Foreign Affairs have pointed out, that is not a condition, but a political necessity.

Kosovo must focus on its basic priorities and to continue to make progress on the rule of law and good governance. We also call on the Kosovo Government to do its utmost for those belonging to national minorities. Such twofold efforts will enable Kosovo to advance on the path towards membership of the European Union.

France will continue to give the situation in Kosovo the highest priority and to promote, to the best of its ability, dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo and their mutual European rapprochement.

Mr. Barbalić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): On behalf of the delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2010/169) on the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK). I would also like to thank Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, for introducing the report. We welcome the participation of His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Mr. Skender Hyseni in today's meeting.

We note with appreciation that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, operating within the framework of resolution 1244 (1999), is successfully continuing the implementation of its

strategic goal — the promotion of security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo. We particularly welcome and commend UNMIK's efforts to encourage the process of reconciliation and to facilitate constructive dialogue and regional cooperation, as well as its focus on mediation between the communities and its support to minority communities.

In that context, we are of the view that efforts to encourage inter-community dialogue and confidence-building among the parties are of particular importance in the area of returns. Although the number of voluntary minority returns remains low, we are encouraged by the fact that there has been an increase in comparison to 2008. Furthermore, in stressing the importance of providing conditions conducive to sustainable return, we welcome UNMIK's efforts to establish task forces, with the main objective of decreasing tension and drawing attention to common needs.

Furthermore, during the reporting period, UNMIK continued to facilitate the activities of the Reconstruction Implementation Commission, led by the Council of Europe, on the reconstruction of cultural and religious heritage sites. We also welcome the European Union's announcement of the appointment of the head of the Greek Liaison Office in Pristina as facilitator in that area, and we urge the key stakeholders to engage constructively in consultations led by the facilitator.

Bosnia and Herzegovina believes that strengthening the rule of law in Kosovo is of great importance. Hence, we welcome the activities of UNMIK and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), operating within the status-neutral framework of the United Nations, in that regard. We also support the existing practice of cooperation and coordination among UNMIK, EULEX, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and NATO — the latter present through the troops of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) — and we hope that this practice will continue. Furthermore, we note that, during the reporting period, the transition of KFOR to a deterrent presence was implemented in gradual and phased manner, as stated in the Secretary-General's report.

In conclusion, Bosnia and Herzegovina would like to reiterate that stability and security in Kosovo are important to achieving lasting peace and prosperity in our region. We believe that the international community should continue to play an important role in supporting the aspirations of the countries of the region to their integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures. At the same time, we believe that the countries of the region should continue to cooperate with the international community in order to reach these goals. Finally, we would like to reiterate that fostering good relations and cooperation with its neighbours is of the utmost importance to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Issoze-Ngondet (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Gabon welcomes the presence among us of His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia. We assure him of our willingness to further strengthen the felicitous links of friendship and cooperation between our two countries, and of our readiness to work towards a peaceful settlement of the dispute under consideration.

My delegation also thanks M. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for the clarity and quality of his briefing on the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/169) on the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We congratulate him and express our appreciation for his commitment to peace and stability in Kosovo.

The current report, which follows that (S/2010/5) which formed the basis of our debate of 22 January (see S/PV. 6264), offers an assessment of the activities undertaken since then by UNMIK and the evolution of the situation on the ground. It addresses, inter alia, the political and security situation, the return of displaced persons and refugees, the consolidation of the rule of law, human rights and the protection of cultural and religious heritage.

My delegation reaffirms its support for the central role played by UNMIK in encouraging and facilitating dialogue and reconciliation among the various communities of Kosovo, and with Pristina and Belgrade. We also appreciate the tremendous work done on the ground by the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Kosovo Force in coordinating their operational and strategic activities.

Gabon has always advocated dialogue and cooperation in the peaceful settlement of crises and

conflicts. We continue to believe that these two tools are absolutely necessary to achieving peace and stability in Kosovo and throughout the region. In this regard, we urge the two parties to resume discussions on matters of disagreement in order to settle their dispute, taking into account the security of the entire region.

As we outlined in the debate of 22 January, we support maintaining UNMIK's presence in Kosovo until the final settlement of the dispute. We take this opportunity to reaffirm our attachment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia. Moreover, it should be recalled that resolution 1244 (1999) remains the legal basis for any peace initiative with respect to this matter. The plan laid out by the Secretary-General is therefore an important contribution to the search for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the Kosovo issue.

Gabon, like many other countries, continues to believe that the final recognition of Kosovo's status by the international community must be based on the rules for processes leading to self-determination. In this regard, my country awaits the decision of the International Court of Justice pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 63/3.

Mr. Puente (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Like other speakers, I welcome Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and thank him for his statement. I also thank Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, for introducing the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/169), and Mr. Skender Hyseni for his briefing.

My country notes the adjustment of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to circumstances on the ground. We welcome the fact that UNMIK's coordination with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) has been undertaken in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999). That resolution is the legal basis for achieving a solution to the situation in Kosovo and contributing to stability in the Balkans.

The report of the Secretary-General indicates that the security situation in Kosovo is calm but fragile. It warns of a potential exacerbation of tensions in the northern part of the territory. UNMIK will therefore have to continue to ensure five key areas on the ground: security, stability, human rights, mediation among communities, and humanitarian assistance and development. Its mandate must also continue to enjoy the support of the parties, the Security Council and the international community.

The United Nations provides a forum for promoting a peaceful solution to the situation in Kosovo that is acceptable to the parties. It must, however, work in cooperation with such regional organizations as the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In the past, Mexico has indicated that the United Nations must strengthen its strategic relations with regional organizations pursuant to Chapter VIII of its Charter in order to cooperate in the prevention and timely mitigation of regional conflicts and the consolidation of human rights and the rule of law. That is why we again encourage the strengthening of cooperation among UNMIK, EULEX and other regional organizations in order to support minority communities, resolve inter-community conflicts, promote reconciliation, dialogue and regional coordination, and encourage development in Kosovo.

With respect to security, we note that since the most recent debate of the Security Council (see S/PV.6264) on this topic, the situation in Kosovo has not improved, particularly in the North. Although the report notes a decline in the number of incidents, Mexico is concerned that the situation remains a factor for instability and an obstacle to the return of refugees from minority communities. We reaffirm our support for UNMIK's work to promote confidence-building measures, assist communities seeking reconciliation, facilitate dialogue on problems of common interest, and support development.

With regard to the specific situation in northern Kosovo, my delegation considers it necessary that, in the elaboration and implementation of programmes for the integration of minorities, the parties should give priority to the protection of human rights and maintain open dialogue and cooperation with UNMIK. All such measures would contribute to transparency and to the inclusion of parties interested in ensuring the effectiveness of such programmes to the benefit of the population and the prevention of violence.

Regarding the situation of displaced persons, although some Kosovo municipalities have implemented return strategies for 2010, the conditions necessary to the safe conduct of such returns — including security, access to public services, the right

to housing and property, and socio-economic and development opportunities — have yet to be established. One positive contribution of UNMIK in this regard has been its support for the establishment of community working groups to help create such conditions. It is appropriate to recall, however, that consistent with resolution 1244 (1999) — and in particular with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law — the parties are obliged to create an environment conducive to the safe voluntary return without discrimination of all those who so desire. We again encourage UNMIK to enhance its coordination with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, local institutions and other humanitarian agencies in the field to that end.

With respect to the rule of law and human rights, my delegation commends the cooperation between UNMIK and EULEX in promoting the strengthening of judicial and human rights institutions in Kosovo and to ensure that the civilian population, including minority communities, has full access to justice and that victims receive due attention.

We acknowledge the importance of promoting the rule of law to fight impunity, ensure accountability, reconcile divergent interests, encourage the reconciliation process among communities, and provide compensation for damages caused by human rights violations. We therefore encourage UNMIK to continue providing mediation and support to the Serbian authorities and the International Committee of the Red Cross in carrying out forensic investigations and investigations into disappeared persons. We also recognize the essential role played by UNMIK, together with EULEX, in the protection of the cultural and religious heritage of Kosovo, and welcome the appointment of a European Union facilitator.

With regard to the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo, I wish to reaffirm my country's position that this matter is seized by the International Court of Justice. Until the Court rules, the principle of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, which all Member States are bound to uphold under the United Nations Charter, remains fully in force. Mexico has been a staunch and unwavering promoter of the principles of justice and international law enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the work of the International Court of Justice. In this respect, we eagerly await the Court's decision.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I would like to join other Security Council colleagues in welcoming the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lamberto Zannier; the Foreign Minister of Serbia, Mr. Vuk Jeremić; and the Foreign Minister of Kosovo, Mr. Skender Hyseni, to the Council Chamber today and to thank them for their statements. I would like to commend, in particular, the important work of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in promoting stability and reconciliation in Kosovo and to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zannier, for his continued leadership and hard work.

The United Kingdom's support for Kosovo's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity is unwavering. Since the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2010/169), we are pleased that four more United Nations Member States have recognized Kosovo, bringing the total to 68. I would also like to recognize Kosovo's second anniversary of independence, which took place this February.

We are pleased to note that progress has continued in Kosovo over recent months. Following local elections, the Kosovo Government established four of the six new Kosovo Serb majority municipalities envisaged in former United Nations Special Envoy Ahtisaari's Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement (S/2007/168/Add.1). The remaining two municipalities are due to be established later this year after municipal and mayoral elections in Partesh/Parteš on 20 June and North Mitrovica in the autumn. This demonstrates a real commitment by the Kosovo Government to improve the everyday lives of minority communities. We encourage the residents of Partesh/Parteš and North Mitrovica to take part in these elections and to embrace the advantages that decentralization will offer local communities. This includes greater access to public services, more control over the resources provided to them by the Pristina Government, and a stronger voice to make their legitimate concerns heard by Kosovo's decision-making institutions and the international organizations assisting their development.

We note the Secretary-General's finding that there has been no increase in the number of ethnically-motivated violent incidents in Kosovo. Given that the last reporting period saw a decrease in the number of security incidents, we are pleased to see that this positive trend has continued. Moreover, it helps create

the right atmosphere for the transition of the Kosovo Force to a deterrent presence.

It is important, however, that Kosovo take further steps to improve its standards in governance and rule of law. This is essential if Kosovo is to match the progress towards European integration made by its neighbours. The United Kingdom supports efforts to help Kosovars of all communities to rebuild and return to their pre-conflict homes.

The ability of all communities in Kosovo to live in safety and dignity is of paramount importance. The recent incidence in Zallq/Žac was serious and should be condemned. There is no place in Kosovo for violence. All sides have committed themselves to this, and we look to Pristina to honour this commitment and to others to take a measured response to the incident.

We strongly encourage deeper cooperation between Belgrade and Pristina on practical issues and echo the Secretary-General's call for flexibility and pragmatism in finding solutions. This can only be to the benefit of all communities in Kosovo. It is also important for all parties to continue addressing the wrongs of the past in order to promote reconciliation and to improve regional relations. In that vein, the United Kingdom commends recent cooperation on missing persons, which has led to the discovery of a mass grave in Serbia. We also welcome the Serbian Parliament's recent resolution condemning the Srebrenica massacre. These are both positive steps.

The United Kingdom strongly supports Serbia's goal of European Union membership. We encourage Serbia to devote its full resources to making progress along this path. Continued disagreement over status issues will only serve as a distraction from achieving this important strategic objective.

The United Kingdom supports the valuable work that the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) is doing in Kosovo. It is important that Belgrade and Pristina continue to cooperate closely with EULEX so that the rule of law, higher standards of governance and justice can be delivered to all of Kosovo's communities. Steps to enable the full functioning of the court in Mitrovica would be a clear demonstration of that cooperation.

UNMIK also continues to do useful work in Kosovo, particularly in support of minority communities. It is important, however, to keep UNMIK's size and resources under close review to ensure that they are commensurate with the scale of its responsibilities.

Kosovo has established its position as a viable, independent State with European Union support for its European perspective. The United Kingdom remains committed to working with Kosovo, Serbia and the wider international community in promoting stability, reconciliation, regional cooperation and economic progress so that Kosovo can advance towards a European Union perspective in parallel with its neighbours.

Ms. Anderson (United States of America): Let me start by welcoming Kosovo Foreign Minister Hyseni and Serbian Foreign Minister Jeremić to the Council today. Let me also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zannier for his excellent and comprehensive briefing. The United States deeply appreciates the work he and his team are doing to support peace and security.

The second anniversary of Kosovo's independence was 17 February, an occasion to mark Kosovo's development as an open, multi-ethnic and democratic republic. Sixty-eight countries have now recognized Kosovo, and the United States congratulates Kosovo and its citizens on the progress they have made to strengthen their democracy and governing institutions and to contribute to stability in the Balkans during these two years.

With this in mind, I would like to focus on five points. First, we welcome the progress made by the Government of Kosovo in enhancing its institutional capacity as it pursues democratic development, regional stability and Euro-Atlantic integration. Kosovo authorities are building on the strong foundation of last fall's municipal elections in implementing the decentralization process laid out in the Ahtisaari plan, which will improve governance and empower all communities. With help from the central Government, newly elected mayors and Serb majority municipalities are putting good governance structures in place and reaching out to the population to address local needs. Deputy Secretary of State Steinberg met with these Serb mayors in April. He found them to be enthusiastic about decentralization and the resources it affords them. We commend these forward-thinking leaders of Kosovo's Serb community for their

constructive and courageous engagement on behalf of their communities.

This effort is still a work in progress, but we believe that success here will encourage engagement by Kosovo Serbs in the North, who also demand and deserve responsive local Government that serves their communities' real interests.

The upcoming June elections in Partesh/Parteš will provide another opportunity for citizens to make their voices heard and effect real change. In contrast, the parallel elections again planned for Mitrovica later this month are not the path to a thriving community. They only detract from good faith efforts to promote stability and reconciliation in Kosovo and the region.

Secondly, improving governance and the rule of law in northern Kosovo is essential. We welcome the Government of Kosovo's efforts to refine and implement a strategy — which was endorsed by the Kosovo Assembly with the support of representatives of all Kosovo's communities — to extend the benefits of good, accountable, legitimate Government to citizens in the North.

We also welcome the European Union's (EU) plans, with the help of the robust presence of the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo in the North, to step up efforts there. We call on Belgrade and Pristina to find opportunities for pragmatic cooperation that can improve life for communities in Kosovo's North, including on cross-border, crime, customs and other rule of law and judicial issues.

Thirdly, we commend the efforts of Kosovo and Serbia to resolve issues affecting displaced persons, including setting the conditions for safe return to their homes in Kosovo. We welcome the recent decision to reopen the Kosovo Property Agency offices in Serbia under the auspices of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We now look to the stakeholders to expedite the Agency's work and remove impediments to resolving remaining cases. As the Secretary-General's report (s/2010/169) notes, there were nearly five times the number of returns in January and February this year than in the same period in 2009. We call on both Kosovo and Serbia to support conditions to extend this constructive trend to facilitate sustainable returns.

Fourthly, let me commend the statements made recently to promote reconciliation by the leaders of both Serbia and Kosovo, including President Tadić's remarks on Orthodox Christmas and President Sejdiu's remarks on Orthodox Easter. It is an encouraging sign that Easter services were held in the Sveti Sava Church in South Mitrovica for the first time since 2004. I should note that the United States is pleased to support the reconstruction efforts at Sveti Sava and at other sites, working with the Reconstruction Implementation Commission, in which the Government of Kosovo actively participates. We hope that the Commission's work can now move forward more rapidly with the cooperation and participation of all affected parties. To this end, we support the EU's newly appointed facilitator, Ambassador Moschopoulos.

Finally, we agree with the Secretary-General's conclusion that the overall situation has remained relatively calm but fragile. We condemn recent incidents of inter-ethnic violence, although, as the report notes, there has been no overall increase in the number of incidents, including those affecting minority communities. The 20 April attack against 26 Kosovo Serb returnee families in the Istog/Istok municipality was unacceptable. We commend Prime Minister Thaci's swift response, including the commitment to providing financial and technical assistance to the victims and 24-hour Kosovo Police patrols for the returnees. The Kosovo Police's smooth assumption from the Kosovo Force in March of responsibility for protecting the Gazimestan monument offered another example of the Government stepping up to its responsibilities.

We also condemn the recent incidents of violence against licensed telephone system operators, apparently in retaliation against Kosovo Government regulatory efforts. Violence is an unacceptable response that undercuts the rule of law and legitimate efforts to ensure that entities licensed by Kosovo can provide public services in Kosovo.

Kosovo's independence is irreversible. Partition is not acceptable. Kosovo's status and borders are settled. The development of effective democratic institutions and efforts to maximize the participation of all citizens is an ongoing process. The United States stands with Kosovo, Serbia and all of the Balkan countries as they advance along the path of building stable, secure democracies that are fully integrated into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Mr. Amieyeofori (Nigeria): We welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Foreign Minister of Serbia, and his insightful statement. We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Lamberto Zannier, for his comprehensive briefing in the context of the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/169) pursuant to resolution 1244 (1999). We also thank Mr. Skender Hyseni for his remarks.

We commend the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for its role in helping to maintain peace and stability in the region. Its efforts to facilitate dialogue among all of the parties concerned, activities in the rule of law area and coordination among the various actors enjoy our strong support. We are encouraged by the collaboration between UNMIK and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo in fostering cooperation and peace in the region, within the status-neutral framework of the United Nations. We welcome the intervention of the European Union in setting up a mechanism to facilitate the preservation of the religious and cultural heritage of the Balkan region. It is an initiative, given the traditional respect for these institutions and values, that will further promote mutual tolerance, harmony and coexistence among the people.

Despite these positive developments, we note that some challenges exist. We share the concern noted in the Secretary-General's report about the possibility of increased tension in northern Kosovo should the implementation of the strategy for northern Kosovo by the authorities in Pristina take place without dialogue with local communities and all relevant stakeholders. It is important that sensitive issues related to northern Kosovo be addressed through peaceful means and close consultation and coordination between all relevant actors, taking into account the specific circumstances and concerns of all communities. Reported incidents of attack against minority communities only serve to raise the perception of insecurity in Kosovo. They also constrain efforts to promote returns of displaced persons, reconciliation and the longer-term stability and development of Kosovo and the region. My country stresses the need to ensure that perpetrators of crimes are brought to justice, such incidents roundly condemned, and efforts made to reach out to victims.

On the issue of minority returns, we welcome the increased number of returnees recorded during the reporting period. We are concerned, however, that overall numbers of returns remain low and that, in the assessment of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the implementation of returns strategies in 2010 may be hampered by lack of funding for returns activities, lack of political commitment and structural problems in local governance, as well as concerns over the viability of conditions for returns. We call for concerted efforts by all stakeholders, in particular UNMIK and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to ensure that returns are voluntary and safe.

Nigeria reiterates its full support for dialogue and a negotiated settlement of the dispute. In concluding, we commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his team for their unrelenting efforts in promoting peace and stability in Kosovo and in the region.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for introducing the report of the Secretary-General on UNMIK (S/2010/169) and for his efforts in the complex situation in the district. We welcome the participation in today's Council meeting of Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and we share his assessments.

We also listened attentively to Mr. Hyseni's statement, which, once again, was not distinguished by its objectivity or compliance with resolution 1244 (1999).

Our position of not accepting Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) is well known. Russia supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia. We are convinced of the need for strict compliance with resolution 1244 (1999), which remains fully in force. It remains binding for all as an international and legal basis for a settlement in Kosovo and for ensuring security in the district. Not understanding or accepting that means not accepting international legality.

The Russian Federation fully supports the work of UNMIK in Kosovo in discharging its mandate. The Mission must continue to play a leading role vis-à-vis the other international presences in the district, as set forth in the November 2008 report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/692). Nobody is entitled to hinder the

use of its vested authority, including in helping to ensure the rights and security of national minorities and in achieving the international community's democratic standards for Kosovo. This applies equally to the Mission's duty with respect to the external representation of Pristina in regional and international mechanisms. We note the irreplaceable role of the Mission in promoting intercommunal dialogue, especially in the northern part of the district. In this context, we welcome its efforts to establish special working groups to attract all interested parties with a view to solving practical problems encountered by the local population.

We see no particular improvement in the relations between the Mission and Pristina in spite of continuing protocol contacts between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Kosovo authorities. The Kosovars are still ignoring the United Nations Mission in spite of the principles for a settlement set forth in resolution 1244 (1999).

The situation in Kosovo causes us serious concern, first and foremost the attempt of the Pristina authorities to implement, come what may, the "strategy for northern Kosovo". We are convinced that any unilateral steps in this area could ignite the already complex inter-ethnic situation in the district, especially against the backdrop of the growing dissatisfaction in the socio-economic situation and the high level of crime and corruption.

In addition, we are just as concerned by the Kosovars' attempts to instigate steps by the international presences, especially the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), to dismantle the repeater stations of Serbian mobile communications operators as well by Pristina's intention to adopt legislation establishing a system by which Serbian citizens could enter Kosovo only on foreign passports. It is vital that there be a legal and political assessment of these actions by the Kosovo authorities. Otherwise, they could lead to a sharp increase in intercommunal tension.

We still find the situation of returns to Kosovo by internally displaced persons to be unsatisfactory. Unfortunately, there still are numerous instances of Kosovo Serbs being forced to sell their property and leave the district, a situation to which no attention has been paid. All of that demonstrates no trend in Kosovo towards increasing inter-ethnic tolerance. Quite the contrary: the situation has regressed. The territories of large Serbian enclaves are gradually shrinking, and the small ones are simply dying off.

The situation with respect to protecting Serbian religious and cultural heritage is alarming. Of course, we have a positive view of the appointment of Ambassador Moschopoulos of Greece as European Union facilitator on these issues. However, we note that the desecration of Serbian graveyards and cathedrals in Kosovo continues. In this context, we are especially concerned about NATO's transfer to the Kosovo police of responsibility for guarding important Serbian cultural sites, a transfer which has begun, and about the general trend towards reducing the numerical strength of the Kosovo Force.

We would especially like to emphasize that EULEX's catering to Pristina authorities, and at times its inactivity, has harmed the authority of that mission, which has been practically exceeding the neutral status set out in its mandate. In these conditions, EULEX must scrupulously comply with the principles of resolution 1244 (1999) and act in a balanced fashion, bearing in mind the interests of both parties, and within the framework of the general coordinating functions of UNMIK.

The complex situation in Kosovo proves the need for the Security Council to retain a leading role on Kosovo. The Council must remain the guarantor of compliance with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and its own decisions. Russia confirms its readiness to continue political efforts to help develop a legally correct and fair resolution of the question of Kosovo under resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): Allow me to extend a warm welcome to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, and to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, Mr. Skender Hyseni. It is a pleasure to see them with us today, and I thank them both for their comprehensive presentations.

I would also like to welcome Mr. Lamberto Zannier and to thank him for his briefing and for introducing the report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/169). I would like also to thank Mr. Zannier for his leadership and to commend the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We are pleased to see that UNMIK continues to discharge its mandate with an eye to evolving circumstances. The common strategic

framework that is being developed by UNMIK and the United Nations team in Kosovo to allow the United Nations family there to focus on the implementation of development programmes is a welcome step.

We also welcome the close cooperation between UNMIK and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), and the expansion of the role and functions of the latter. We remain committed to continuing our contribution to both EULEX and KFOR in accordance with needs and requirements on the ground.

In the two years since Kosovo became independent, the number of countries that have recognized Kosovo has constantly grown. Turkey considers this to be an irreversible process that will ultimately contribute to lasting peace, stability and prosperity in the region. On the other hand, as a young State, Kosovo faces some important challenges. To surmount those challenges and to provide a better life for all of its citizens, Kosovo must concentrate on its priorities and continue to make improvements in areas such as the economy, the rule of law, good governance and human rights.

That said, as Minister Hyseni's statement demonstrates, Kosovo has already made progress in solidifying its democracy. Elections which are widely recognized as fair and credible have been held. Concrete achievements have taken place with regard to decentralization, which is a key element in creating a multi-ethnic society. Important steps have been taken and legislation adopted towards the protection of human rights and the integration of minorities. We are also glad to see that there is a new momentum in the returns process.

We are equally pleased to see that the security situation remains stable. We share the concern related to northern Kosovo and welcome the steps taken by the Kosovo authorities towards reconciliation and the integration of all of the communities there. Such efforts will take time and require important resources, but we believe that they will contribute to gathering all of Kosovo's citizens around a common vision. In that respect, we were very much encouraged by the words of President Sejdiu, who, on the occasion of Orthodox Christmas, confirmed the commitment of the Kosovo institutions to work for a brighter, prosperous and peaceful future in which all citizens of Kosovo would feel totally free and equal in their common home, Kosovo. Like President Sejdiu, we believe that it is important that people of all ethnicities in all parts of the country should come to feel that Kosovo is their home and that Kosovo's future is their future.

It is with this understanding that we expect Kosovo Serbs to take part in the political process and administrative structures of the country. We also urge all stakeholders to refrain from actions that will cause unnecessary burdens in their lives.

It is encouraging that Kosovo is taking steps to build friendly relations with its neighbours and strengthen regional cooperation. It is our sincere hope that relations between Belgrade and Pristina will also ultimately serve to contribute to lasting regional peace, stability and prosperity. While there are disagreements over the status issue, it should not be a reason for both parties not to cooperate pragmatically and make progress towards reconciliation and the resolution of some outstanding problems in areas such as cultural heritage, energy, infrastructure, customs and organized crime.

We agree with the Secretary-General's observation that, by putting aside status considerations, Belgrade and Pristina should show flexibility to enable Kosovo's representation in regional and international mechanisms and forums that are essential to the economic and democratic development and long-term stability of the region. We call on both sides to find pragmatic solutions towards that end.

As an important player in the region, Serbia can contribute more to the consolidation of peace, democracy and prosperity in the Balkans. We also welcome and support developing relations between Serbia and the European Union. The international community should continue to support Serbia in its efforts to integrate with European structures. As for Turkey, we are pleased to enjoy close and cooperative relations with Serbia, which we are determined to take even further to the benefit of both our countries and of the entire region.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Lebanon.

I would first like to thank Mr. Lamberto Zannier, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his comprehensive

briefing. I would also like to welcome Mr. Vuk Jeremić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and to thank him for his statement. My thanks also go to Mr. Skender Hyseni for his statement.

With regard to the security situation, the Secretary-General has referred in his report (S/2010/169) to incidents, including those affecting minorities, not having increased in comparison with the previous reporting period. Apart from that, the security situation has remained relatively stable. We call upon all parties to cooperate to bring about justice and support victims, by ensuring accountability for criminals. Such efforts will have a positive impact on stability and security and serve to reassure various groups. It is important also to improve institutional mechanisms for the protection of human rights.

With regard to the situation in northern Kosovo, we believe that sustained efforts must be made vis-à-vis local communities. Any effort to ensure inclusion for northern Kosovo must include open, flexible dialogue and ongoing consultation with all stakeholders. We call upon all stakeholders in northern Kosovo to play a constructive role by encouraging local communities to meet and enter into dialogue with a view to finding practical solutions to sensitive issues.

With regard to the missions working in Kosovo, we commend UNMIK for its work to strengthen security and stability, ensure respect for human rights and foster reconciliation through cooperation among the various groups. We urge the Kosovo authorities to continue dialogue and cooperation with UNMIK in a constructive and practical manner. We welcome the coordination among UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force in the context of neutrality set out in resolution 1244 (1999).

With regard to cooperation on humanitarian, cultural and development issues, we welcome the fact that in 2010 there has been an increase in volunteer minority returns compared with 2008, according to statistics from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We commend efforts by the UNMIK and the European Commission Liaison Office to permanently resolve the problem of camps for minorities. The number of those repatriated remains very low. We need to ensure security and development conditions that are conducive to returns.

The various parties to cooperate have committed themselves to protecting the religious and cultural heritage of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo, which is an encouraging step forward in protection of that heritage. We commend the constructive work done by the head of Greece's liaison office in Pristina as facilitator of those efforts.

We call upon all parties to find practical solutions to matters of common interest by moving away from politicization with respect to the status of Kosovo. There must be cooperation among all parties to improve daily life of the people of Kosovo, irrespective of their affiliations. We encourage Belgrade and Pristina to adopt a constructive approach to ensure the participation of representatives of Kosovo's institutions in international and regional forums. We also call on them to pursue constructive and direct dialogue aimed at reducing tensions. Lebanon encourages peaceful solutions to these problems, which can strengthen regional security and stability throughout the Western Balkans.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia has asked to make a further statement, and I give him the floor.

Mr. Jeremić (Serbia): I am going to be very brief. I just want to reflect on a few thoughts that I heard this afternoon.

I cannot agree with some of the speakers' assessments that Serbia is exercising irresponsible interference in other countries' regional affairs. When it comes to Serbia's regional outlook and the way that it deals with the region, I think that the Government has demonstrated clearly that reconciliation and peace are at the forefront of how we see the future of the Balkans: a future in the European Union.

I am glad that a few speakers today noted that the Serbian parliament has passed the resolution on Srebrenica. But I would like to underline that that is the first decision of a parliament in the history of Europe to extend an apology for something that took place in history. As we all know, the history of Europe is full of occurrences that would necessitate an apology of one sort or another. But Serbia was the first in history to extend an apology.

My Government is very proud of what we are doing in order to make sure that there is peace and

stability throughout the region — in Bosnia, in Croatia, in the disputed parts of Serbia and elsewhere.

Serbia places no preconditions on the reopening of a dialogue. We do not attach — as I heard that Pristina does — conditions that someone is to be treated in this way or that way. We are ready to talk about everything. We are ready to talk about all the outstanding issues, including the one that is at the very heart of all outstanding issues, that is, the future status of the province.

I believe that borders anywhere in the world can be settled only upon agreement by all interested parties, and not by announcements of any unilateral action, no matter how mighty the supporters of such unilateral action may be. That goes for the borders of Serbia and the borders of any other country of the world. Serbia stands ready to engage in a dialogue that would settle all the outstanding issues once and for all in a peaceful manner, and Serbia asks for the support of this Council and of the United Nations in this peaceful approach.

This is the first time in the history of the Balkans that an issue of this sort is not being resolved by conflict. Nobody is trying to go to war with anybody, and I think this is a great, positive development, because we are talking about 600 or 700 years of Balkan history. This is the first time that somebody is trying to do to settle such issues peacefully, including the issue of the border. That is what we propose. We stand ready to engage, in the best possible faith, to resolve it.

I want to draw attention to one thing. Somebody said that, during this reporting period, five times more internally displaced persons returned than in the previous period. In the previous period, there were 50 people, and this time 259, but that is out of 200,000. Yes, the math is correct, but if we look at the absolute numbers, I think they represent our common failure, and we need to address it in the best possible faith. As we have engaged on all outstanding regional issues in the best possible faith and in full sincerity, the Government of Serbia stands ready to engage with all interested parties in resolving this issue once and for all. But it is only through dialogue — peaceful dialogue — that we believe we can solve it. That is all I wanted to say.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to Mr. Hyseni.

Mr. Hyseni: Very briefly and, in a way, quite reluctantly, I will continue to take a few more minutes of the Council's time in reaction to a few quite misleading allegations.

Very generally, on the rule of law and the commitment of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo to fighting organized crime and corruption, no one should doubt that determination. The very fact that one can see tangible action on that front shows how determined the Government of the Republic of Kosovo is. We are working closely on that with all international presences, especially the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX).

The game of figures — 200,000 or 250,000 displaced persons — continues. We have informed the Council of the real figures many times. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports of 1999 included not only Serb internally displaced persons or refugees, but all of them. But, really, it is not about numbers; again, it is about the determination of the Government of Kosovo to seeing progress in the repatriation of all of its citizens, especially the numerous Serb citizens still outside the borders of our country.

We have protected the cultural heritage and religious heritage of all ethnic communities in Kosovo for centuries, and we are going to continue to do so. Nothing can stand in the way of our protecting cultural heritage, and we will continue to take over those duties from the highly respected Kosovo Force units that have been giving us a hand in this very important task.

I need to inform the Council that we long tolerated illegal mobile telephone service providers in a part of our country for the sole reason of not disturbing some members of our country. Those illegal telephone service providers have been removed in an effort to restore law and order in that part of our country.

At the same time, we have undertaken very tangible and successful efforts to make sure that all members of the Serb community in that part of Kosovo will swiftly have access to means of communication. The public telecom company has offered thousands and thousands of SIM cards and telephones free of charge to the members of the Serb community.

Unfortunately, there was an illegal, violent attack on legal telephone providers in that part of our country.

and that is unacceptable. Indeed, the perpetrators removed the antennas of the IPKO and Vala companies — which are legal, licensed telephone service providers — instead trying to use the services that those companies offered. We have invited the Republic of Serbia to enter into roaming agreements with very serious telephone companies in Kosovo, and we are open to that.

I wish to say just a little more on regional cooperation and dialogue. I need to re-emphasize very strongly yet again that Kosovo is ready to sit and talk with the authorities in Belgrade on many issues of mutual concern. Kosovo and Serbia will continue to be where they are as close neighbours, and they need to work together for a future common good and a future European perspective — not only a common Kosovo-Serbia European perspective, but also a regional European perspective.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): There are no further speakers on my list. The Council has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.